

to—on PEPFAR, which is the AIDS initiative on the continent of Africa, as well as our malaria initiative.

All in all, this administration has relied upon the great compassion of the American people, the sacrifice of those who wear the uniform. And so we leave town honored

to have served and proud of the job we have done. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico January 13, 2009

President Bush. *Bienvenido a mi amigo.* Mr. President, welcome.

President Calderon. Thank you.

President Bush. It has been a true pleasure to work with President Calderon. He's a man of conviction, he is a man of principle, and he is a man who's willing to take on tough challenges. I have appreciated every meeting I've had with him.

I want to take—talk about two subjects quickly. One, Americans are concerned about the battle that's taking place in Mexico, and I want our fellow citizens to understand that this man understands the responsibilities of government to provide security; that he will not allow his country, or parts of his country, to be taken over by narco-traffickers; and that the United States of America wants to share and help deal with the issue on both sides of the border. The less drugs we use, the less pressure there will be in Mexico. We have got responsibilities to help prevent guns from going from the United States into Mexico.

And so, Mr. President, you and I have laid the foundation for a constructive, mutual engagement on this issue.

And secondly, I want to thank you for your steadfast support of trade. I'm a big, strong believer in NAFTA. NAFTA has been good for the United States of America, and NAFTA has been good for Mexico. And I want to thank you for that.

And so, Mr. President, it has been a pleasure to work with you. Thank you for your friendship.

President Calderon. Thank you.

President Bush. Yes. *Y ahora en el espanol.*

President Calderon. Como no.

[At this point, President Calderon made remarks in Spanish. He then spoke in English, as follows.]

President Calderon. We have a strong commitment in order to fight and defeat the criminals in Mexico, and we will do so. And we have a strong commitment with the rule of law, enforcement of the law in our country.

[President Calderon continued in Spanish. He then concluded in English, as follows.]

President Calderon. Thank you, President Bush—

President Bush. Yes, sir.

President Calderon. —and good luck in the future.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

White House Staff Member. Okay, guys, thank you—

President Bush. Hold on. *Un momento, un momento.*

President Calderon. Wait. Hold on.

[An interpreter then provided the translation of President Calderon's previously delivered remarks.]

Interpreter. Good afternoon, friends. I wanted to say that I came here to Washington, DC, to wish President Bush the very best. I want to wish him and his family all the best in this new phase. And I want to thank him especially for the friendship that he has shown me over the last 2 years in facing our common challenges together—

President Calderon. And his support.

Interpreter. —and for his support. [Laughter]

With regard to the issues that President Bush has raised, I want to say that our administration has made a crucial decision in this regard. We are going to be promoting law; we are going to be promoting order in our country. We will be promoting the rule of law for all Mexicans.

We have worked jointly in this regard. We have worked together on the drug-trafficking combat front. We have worked together to combat organized crime.

This is not an isolated problem for any country. This is a common problem that affects us both. And in order to do so, we have worked together, and we have made this resolution.

We are committed to fighting criminals and to overcoming them once and for all. And the rule of law is the one thing that I want to stress we are going to promote, no matter what, in our country.

I agree with what the President has said with regard to the North America Free Trade Agreement. It has proved to be very useful, both for the United States and for Mexico. In that regard, millions of jobs were created here in the United States. Mexico is the second largest purchaser of

U.S. goods. We buy, in fact, twice as many U.S. products as the People's Republic of China. Two million jobs based on exports were created in Mexico—

President Calderon. No, in the United States.

Interpreter. —in the United States, excuse me, as a result of NAFTA. [Laughter] And yesterday I was discussing with President-elect Obama the fact that we are willing to continue working on future additions of a way to continue to build on the achievements that NAFTA has created—benefits, issues of concern to both of our citizens. I understand that there are issues of concern to Mexicans, as well as to U.S. citizens, on the issue of the environment and on labor.

I want to wish the very best to President Bush, to his family, as well as to the United States. The U.S. will continue to solve its problems with success, I have no doubt about that. And we in Mexico can only wish the very best for this country, a great country, and for its citizens in overcoming the economic crisis it is now facing, overcoming other problems, as well as drug consumption, because any problems arising in the United States in some way will also affect Mexican citizens as well.

And so we can only wish you the very best in every area. Thank you.

President Calderon. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, thank you. *Adios.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, President Calderon referred to President-elect Barack Obama. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom January 13, 2009

The President. Good afternoon to everybody, and thank you all for coming. We have assembled quite a distinguished crowd to honor three good friends: President Uribe, Prime Minister Howard, and Prime Minister Blair. Laura and I welcome you to the White House.

You'll always be welcomed in our country. And we hope to have you come down and visit us in Texas. As you probably have heard, we're changing addresses here—[laughter]—in a little less than 7 days.

We're delighted to have a lot of distinguished guests, people who have worked with you throughout your time in office; members of your family who are here, we're really glad you've come.

I want to thank the Vice President, members of the Cabinet, and Members of the Congress who have joined us as well. We offer a special welcome to those who are personal friends of the honorees. I know they're as delighted to have you here as I am.

In a few moments the military aide will read the citations for the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The medal is America's highest civil award. It is given in recognition of exemplary achievement and to convey the utmost esteem of the people and the President of the United States.

In these 8 years, I have presented the Medal of Freedom to some of our most eminent citizens. On occasion, I have also had the honor of presenting it to citizens of other lands who inspired particular admiration in the United States and provided courageous leadership to our world. Among these recipients have been Vaclav Havel, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Nelson Mandela, and the late Pope John Paul II.

This afternoon I am pleased to award the Medal of Freedom to three extraordinary leaders. We honor a sitting President and two former vice—Prime

Ministers, each one of them a true friend of the United States who met historic challenges with great tenacity, and who provides a lasting example of statesmanship at home and abroad.

The first day I met Tony Blair, almost exactly 8 years ago, he was in his second term as Prime Minister, and I was just starting out. After our first meeting, a reporter asked if we'd found anything in common, and I jokingly replied that we both used Colgate toothpaste. [Laughter]

The truth is I did feel a close connection to Tony Blair. As I said after the first meeting, I knew that when either of us gets in a bind, there will be a friend on the other end of the phone. My friend was there, indeed, after America was attacked on September the 11th, 2001. And it just wasn't on the phone line. When I stood in the House Chamber to ask the civilized world to rally to freedom's cause, there in the gallery was the staunch friend, Prime Minister Tony Blair.

He was there in a moment of trial to affirm the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. And he was there to show America, and all nations, that he understood the stakes in the war on terror. As he said, "Just as the terrorist seeks to divide humanity in hate, so we have to unify it around an idea. And that idea is liberty." Under Tony Blair's leadership, the might and the moral authority of Great Britain have been applied to the war on terror from the first day. Our nations have worked proudly together to destroy terrorist havens, liberate millions, and help rising democracies to serve the aspirations of their people.

Tony Blair's entire career is defined by his devotion to democratic values and human dignity. At his very center, this man believes in freedom: freedom from oppression, freedom from hunger, freedom from